

Intertextuality: A Comparison of *Kifo Kisimani* and *Mstahiki Meya* Kiswahili Plays

Dave Bowen*

Kabarak University, Kenya

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*Corresponding author: Dave Bowen

Abstract

Review Article

This paper aimed to establish the existence of intertextuality between the two Kiswahili plays. These plays are *Kifo Kisimani* (2006) and *Mstahiki Meya* (2009). The analysis is based on the theory of intertextuality as advanced by Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975). One of the intertextuality tenets is that there is no original literary work. One literary text is a reflection of another text. The two Kiswahili plays were selected purposively. Data was collected in the library. The two plays were read and relevant data extracted, analyzed and conclusion drawn. Intertextuality can exist at different levels in texts, for example, it can be through form, structure, vocabularies, stylistic devices and themes. In this study, I have concentrated on themes only. The themes which resemble each other from the two plays were discussed and compared based on the existence of intertextuality. This paper has demonstrated that *Kifo Kisimani* and *Mstahiki Meya* have a lot of resemblance between the two plays at thematic level. The authors of *Kifo Kisimani* and *Mstahiki Meya* have developed the same themes in their respective literary works. This shows that intertextuality is an important way of enriching the author's literary work.

Keywords: Intertextuality, Theme, Play.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper aimed at discussing intertextuality which exists between the two Kiswahili plays: *Kifo Kisimani* and *Mstahiki Meya* at thematic level. The authors of the two Kiswahili plays appear to tackle almost the same themes which affect most of the African nations. Most of their themes emanate from poor leadership and misuse of public resources with an intention of remaining in power as long as possible. The citizens who question the ills in the government are branded dissidents and put in jail without trial.

The plots of Plays of the study

The plays of this study are *Kifo Kisimani* and *Mstahiki Meya*. *Kifo Kisimani* is a play written by Kitheka Wa Mberia, it touches on pertinent issues which affect an African society. It majorly delves on the struggles between the bad leaders and its citizens. The play is divided into ten scenes and most of the developments surround two main characters: Mwelusi the antagonist and Bokono the protagonist. The scene of the play is Butangi. The play begins with Bokono's planned meeting which fails to take place. The failure of the citizens to turn up for the meeting is attributed to Mwelusi's incitement. The occurrence annoys Bokono and his sycophants like batu and Zigu. They promise

to stop Mwelusi from inciting the citizens against Bokono's leadership. Sycophants like Batu feature prominently in the play. It seems the author use the to paint a bad picture about Bokono's leadership.

Mwelusi is arrested and taken to custody where he is tortured to make him confess that he is a member of the proscribed Kabakana movement and for being used by neighboring countries to destroy Butangi. Mwelusi chooses to defy the order. It appears that in Butangi, the government mercenaries are misused by the leaders with impunity. The soldiers are corrupt and inept in the discharge of their duties. They serve the leaders who are the minority and neglect the majority of the citizens of Butangi, whom they were employed to serve.

Later, with the ingenuity of Tanya and Andua, Mwelusi escapes miraculously from jail but Gege is used to lure him into his death at Mkomani well. Mwelusi dies a bitter death. However, towards the end, things change and Bokono's reign is toppled. Bokono, Batu, Gege are arrested. Bokono's wife, Nyalwe is spared because she used to warn Bokono about his bad leadership.

On the other hand, *Mstahiki Meya*, is play build on four parts with each part having several scenes. The play opens with a sad scene in the dispensary where poor patients line up yet there is no medicine. We get to know about the desperate situation through the dialogue between Dr Siki and the nurse, Waridi. The government has failed to supply medicine even for the basic ailments. Furthermore, citizens do not have food and they are suffering from diseases like cholera and malnutrition which are caused by lack of food.

The story moves to Mayor's palace where Dr Siki meets the mayor and candidly explains to him the situation in the hospitals especially the lack of medicine. He accuses the mayor for failing to safeguard the interest of the electorate especially in the provision of better health services. Dr Siki's move exasperates the mayor and dismisses the accusations as an abuse to his leadership.

However, as the play progresses, other characters miss advice and miss lead the mayor. Diwani I and Diwani II continue to flatter the mayor for their selfish interests. They are used to spread government lies that the medicine have been procured. Councilors' salaries are increased arbitrarily because of their degree of sycophancy. Also, their salaries are not taxed. Throughout the play, *Mstahiki Meya* allows himself to be miss led by sycophants. For example, Bili miss leads the mayor on how to make money corruptly. He advises him not to bother about taking care of his name but he should mind about his stomach, his people, children and grand children.

Eventually, because of his inept and bad leadership, the workers go on strike and escalates to the fall of *Mstahiki Meya* rule. *Mstahiki Meya* and his bad advisors like Diwani I and Diwani II are arrested and taken to answer several charges. Mayor's and his sycophants antiques are brought to an end in Cheneo.

Thematic Intertextuality in *Kifo Kisimani* and *Mstahiki Meya* plays

*The term intertextuality began with Mikhael Bakhtin (1895-1975) who argued that literary works have intertextuality [1]. Intertextuality is the relationship between texts: especially literary texts [2]. Kristevar [3] posits that there is no original text, no text is independent of other related text and that every text is a reflection of another text. This view seem to be echoed by Mousa and Hooshang [4] who argue that there is no text which is a complete creation of its author, it is constructed through the process of interconnections of textual elements of the relating texts and the authors creativity. Intertextuality is the cycles of the chain of texts which are connected to and have influences on the present particular text. In the context of this study, *Mstahiki Meya* text is a reflection of *Kifo Kisimani* text at thematic level. Wamitila [5] says intertextuality can come in different levels, it can be similarity Timmamy*

*[6] posit that a literary work can be a reflection of another work thematically. The two plays *Kifo Kisimani* and *Mstahiki Meya* appear to be a reflection of each other in most of their themes. In this section, intertextuality at themes level has been analyzed:*

Bad Leadership

*The two authors have put a lot of emphasis on this theme of bad leadership; hence there is a big resemblance in its development. Both authors have used their main characters or protagonists to develop the bad leadership theme. Kitheka Wa Mberia, the author of *Kifo Kisimani* uses *Mstahiki Meya* While Timothy Arege, the author of *Mstahiki Meya* uses *Mstahiki Meya* to develop bad leadership theme. In both novels leaders use their authority to benefit themselves and their sycophants. Leaders fail to serve the electorate. For example, in *Mstahiki Meya* play, *Mstahiki Meya* came up with bad policies and laws meant to safeguard their selfish interests. *Mstahiki Meya* is portrayed as a good example of inept leaders who slow down positive development. In Cheneo poor health services are seen. Hospitals do not have medicine; there is weak education system, environmental pollution and water pollution. The same scenario is reflected in *Kifo Kisimani* play where Bokono displays bad leadership traits. Bokono too rules for his own selfish interest. He has been used by the author to develop the theme of bad leadership. For example, he is a stumbling block to development, he also steals public resources. Under Bokono's watch, the leadership of Butangi burns up Azena's village and they also come up with new absurd rules meant to deny the citizens their rights and further their selfish interests. For example, people are allowed to fetch water thrice a week which is unfair to the people of Butangi.*

Furthermore, Timothy Arege and Kitheka Wa Mberia have used sycophants as characters in their plays and portrayed them to mislead the leaders. For example, in *Kifo Kisimani* play, the author has used Batu and Zigu as sycophants to develop the theme of bad leadership. Zigu and Batu are used by Bokono to further his evil actions in Butangi. Through their evil plans the main character, Mwelusi is arrested, put behind bars and tortured without any good reason. Mwelusi is branded a thorn in the flesh in Butangi society. Therefore, sycophants are misused by the leaders in their quest for power and riches. On the hand, in *Mstahiki Meya*, the author portrays and uses Bili, Diwani I and Diwani II as sycophants to *Mstahiki Meya* a role they play so well. *Mstahiki Meya* feels good but the sycophants mislead and misadvise him. In both plays, it is evident that sycophancy breeds bad leadership.

Alienation

Alienation terminology is associated with Brecht (1898-1956) ideas about plays. Alienation is defined as state of making somebody less friendly or

sympathetic towards you or to make someone feel he/she do not belong to a particular group Oxford Dictionary, 1995. Saleem [7] defines alienation as the state of being alienated or estranged from something or somebody; it is the condition of the mind while Encyclopedia Britannica defines it as the state of feeling estranged or separated from ones milieu, work, products of worth or self. From the foregone definitions, alienation is a state where one or a group of people get separated from other people in the society because of some reasons. Alienation as a theme in literature has continues to feature in literary works. Alienation is a recurrent theme in the 20th Century fiction and most cases it is developed through protagonists, the protagonists are misfit in their society largely because of their defects in themselves or some evils in society [7]. Wamitila [5] seems to support the argument by saying alienation is a terminology that occurs in literature analysis. Karl Marx classifies alienation into two categories: Political alienation and social alienation. Characters in literary works get alienated because of their acquired political and social status in their society. They get alienated from the mass or the common people. Hence they get out of touch with reality and they suffer from loss of self awareness. Political and social alienation of protagonists have been developed by the authors of the plays focused in this study: *Kifo Kisimani* and *Mstahiki Meya*.

The theme of alienation is featuring prominently in the plays in this study. In *Mstahiki Meya* play, the character Meya is alienated because of his leadership failure. He isolates himself together with his close advisors. Meya suffers political and social isolation and he is out of touch with reality in Cheneo nation. He takes no steps to make cheneo better. He messes up with education and health sector. Cheneo's education system is meant for the poor. Meya and the rich do not trust own services and they choose to take their children abroad. Bili, Diwani I and Diwani II are alienated because of their behavior of misleading the Mayor. For example, Bili advises Meya to sell the golden mace also the preacher, Mhubiri uses religion to mislead the mayor because of greed. Meya, Diwani I and Diwani II were elected to serve the people of Cheneo but they have chosen to follow their selfish interests in their service and deliberations. At the end of the play, Meya is arrested and isolated.

On the other hand in *Kifo Kisimani* Bokono as a protagonist, is alienated from the electorate because of power and corruption. Bokono does not get true picture of Butangi because he is isolated by hypocrites like Batu, Zigu and Mweke. He eliminates critics like Mwelusi and others because of political reasons. In Butangi, Bokono ensures that democracy is limited. He is a dictator. He isolates the electorate and prevents them from getting access to water and other public resources like public land. He lives in political tower and enjoys the trappings of power like good security,

salary, power and better service. These make him forget his people a situation which triggers a struggle and friction between the ruling class and electorate. Mwelusi and Andua represent the electorate in leading the struggle against bad leadership. Bokono feels the heat of alienation when he is arrested and loses power in Butangi. This confirms that political alienation comes with its own consequences.

Oppression

The theme of oppression appears in the two plays. In *Kifo Kisimani* the soldiers are used by Bokono to arrest, torture and kill suspected dissidents (pg 43). Mwelusi is arrested and imprisoned without due process of the law. Other characters like Andua are not spared too. She is beaten up by the soldiers when she tried to fetch water at Mbayuni well. Tanya, Mwelusi's mother confesses that Butangi soldier are meant to torture its citizens instead of guarding them. The citizens of Butangi are in trouble and live in constant fear because of the cruel hand of their leaders and soldiers. No one is allowed to speak out. Their basic rights are violated every day. They are forced to follow and worship their leaders blindly. They have been oppressed to submission.

In *Mstahiki Meya*, leaders oppress their citizens. The poor are denied proper medical care and do not have decent meals. In Cheneo, large population lack food and medicine. Workers are poorly remunerated and those who strike are sacked on the spot against the law and even sometimes killed (pg 21). Workers continue to suffer, yet councilors' salary and allowances are increased arbitrarily every day. The youth of Cheneo who are University graduates are languishing in poverty, they do not have jobs. They are recruited to sing sycophancy songs to Mstahiki Meya (pg 20). The mayor misuses the bad laws to reign on the people of Cheneo (pg 49), the laws he misuses include; *Mayor's Act, Riot Act and Collective responsibility Act*.

Nationalism

Nationalism is the desire by a group of people who share the same race, culture to form an independent country; a feeling love for and pride in ones country [8]. People who love their country serve with dedication and faithfulness. In *Kifo Kisimani* and *Mstahiki Meya* plays the authors have portrayed the protagonists as nationalists, characters who mean well for their country and they have used them to develop the theme of nationalism. They struggle to bring positive changes in their respective societies. In *Kifo Kisimani* the author uses the following characters to bring freedom in Butangi: Mwelusi, Andua, Askari I, Atega and Kame. They have the courage to question the ills in government and the bad activities of Bokon's puppets. They are the freedom fighters who continue to champion the rights of the masses in their society. The pressure for changes intensifies even after Mwelusi is

killed by his brother, Gege (pg 105). The play ends with Bokono, Batu, Zigu, Mweke and Gege are arrested by the demonstrators who are nationalist. The freedom fighters succeed to bring change and free Butangi from the claws of bad leadership.

In *Mstahiki Meya* play, the author also uses nationalists to bring change in Cheneo society. Dr Siki, Diwani III, Tatu, Beka, Medi and the nurse, waridi have been portrayed as characters who are dedicated in their work. They love their country too. Dr Siki took care for his patients well in the dispensary even when he is not paid. Furthermore, because the love for his country, he speaks the truth. He has the courage to question Mstahiki Meya excesses and generally his bad leadership. On the other hand, Diwani III does not support the bad decisions made by Mstahiki Meya and his colleagues, Diwani I, Diwani II and Bili. Diwani I aim is to bring progress and development to his country (pg 17). Also, Beka, Medi and Tatu are nationalists because as workers' they chose to champion for the demands of the workers in Cheneo. They are courageous and strong (pg 65). Nationalism gives people the impetus to sacrifice for a noble course. Therefore, in the two plays: *Kifo Kisimani* and *Mstahiki Meya* theme of nationalism has been developed adequately by the characterization of various characters.

Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy is a behavior in which somebody pretends to have moral standards or opinions that they do not actually have [8]. The plays in this study are replete with characters that pretend to be good and loyal to their bosses but they have ill motives. Their actions are led by their selfish interests. The authors have used characters close to power to build this theme of hypocrisy. These characters do not show their true behavior and characteristic traits, especially when they are with their leaders. The effects of hypocrisy are seen through the failures of the leaders who are misled by hypocrites in the society. In *Kifo Kisimani* Batu as a character close to Bokono is portrayed as an employee who always flatters his boss all the time. Batu purues hypocrisy for his survival in government. He pretends to help Bokono in the management of Butangi but it is clear that he is dishonest.

Furthermore, Batu tries pretends to be a friend to Mwelusi when he visits him in prison yet we know before then, he was busy planning with Zigu how they could eliminate him. Batu intention was to have Mwelusi killed but he chose to pretend to befriend Mwelusi so as to cajole him confess and probably have an easy way of eliminating him from Butangi society. Also his hypocrisy is seen when he visits Mwelusi's home, Batu lies to Tanya, Mwelusi's mother that he was her friend. He pretended to be a friend with an intention of knowing the whereabouts of Mwelusi after he escaped from prison. Other characters who have been used by the author to develop hypocrisy theme in

Kifo Kisimani are Mweke and Talui. They are used by the author to lure Gege into killing his brother Mwelusi. Gege is given false promise that he could marry Alida, daughter to Bokono, the promise which excites Gege so much. Mweke and Talui's pretence succeeds and Mwelusi is killed by Gege at Mkomani well in Ilangi valley. After Gege accomplished the murder, he is dejected to realize he was conned. The promise was a lie.

On the other hand *Mstahiki Meya* play, the author too has used hypocrites to develop this theme. The characters who are hypocrites are Diwani I, Diwani II, Mhubiri and Bili. These are characters who are trusted by Meya. They are his chief advisors in matters of governance. However, they seem to misadvise the leader in most cases. For example, Diwani I, incites the mayor to act tough on the striking workers without mercy, he reminds him the as a mayor he has the capability to do so. It is a bad advice. Bili on the other hand pretends to be near Meya with an intention of enriching himself. He champions corruption and injustices in Cheneo. Bili's advices are geared towards misleading the Meya. Unfortunately the Meya buys into the bad ideas of hypocrites. Hypocrite characters and their bad ideas cost the Meya his position at the end of the play. He is toppled and arrested by the demonstrators. Indeed, Meya's failures can be attributed to hypocrites who pretended to be true friends of the Meya. They were not honest and did not love Cheneo at all. Also, Mhubiri is also an hypocrite because he hides religion to conceal his true character. Mhubiri Says:

Kisw: "*Uongozi unaotafuta dini utadumu maana umebarikiwa...*"

Eng: "*The leadership which seeks religion will last because it has been blessed...*"

Mhubiri pretends to pray and bless the Meya yet he knows very well that he is not clean in his leadership. He claims that Meya's leadership will last which is a lie.

Betrayal

Betrayal is the action of betraying someone who trust you, especially by not being loyal or faithful to them [8]. The two authors have developed the theme of betrayal using various characters. Characters in the two plays appear to betray each other because of the changing situations. In *Kifo Kisimani* Butangi leaders like Bokono, Zigu and Batu are seen to betray the citizens of Butangi by the way they lead. Citizens are denied their rights as enshrined in the constitution of the land. For example, leaders in power led by Bokono and *Mstahiki Meya* steal public resources and make them their personal properties. Bokono denies Butangi citizens to fetch water from the public well in Mkomani, the only source of water. Bokono also betrays his subjects by denying them the freedom of expression. Citizens who dare to question the short comings of the leaders are arrested, tortured and even

killed. Such actions from the government are signs of betrayal. Also, the close employees to Bokono betray him by giving him wrong and misleading advices.

On the other hand, Meya, Bili, Diwani I and Diwani II have been used by the author of *Mstahiki Meya* to develop the theme of betrayal. Meya betrays his citizens by failing to provide medicine in dispensaries and by failing to ensure food security in Cheneo. He is not bothered by the suffering of the poor populace who lack food in his society. Bili, Diwani I and Diwani II appear also to betray Meya and the people of Cheneo. They offer advices which make the citizens of Cheneo suffer more. For example, they incite the Meya to misuse some of the laws to his advantage. Their advices also mislead the Meya hence he makes wrong decisions in his leadership. This is a betrayal of the trust bestowed upon them by the Meya. They are dishonest in their activities in cheneo.

CONCLUSION

This analysis has established that resemblance exists between *Kifo Kisimani* and *Mstahiki Meya* plays at thematic level. The two authors have developed similar themes using almost the same characters. For example, the two authors have used either soldiers or police who are loyal to leaders in authority to develop their themes like oppression and bad leadership. The bad leaders, Bokono and Meya are removed from power because of their bad leadership. Characters who surrounded Bokono and Meya in *Kifo Kisimani* and

Mstahiki Meya respectively are the ones used to build the theme of hypocrisy in the two plays. Therefore, there is intertextuality between the two plays at thematic level. The development of the themes in the two texts appears to be the same.

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